

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW: IS SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA KEEPING UP?

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Engelbrecht, L.K. 2009. Yesterday, today and tomorrow: Is social work supervision in South Africa keeping up? *ASASWEI & NASW SA Conference*. Drakensberg: South Africa.

Available at:

<http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=YUORtfMAAAAJ&hl=en>



INTRODUCTION

- Recruitment and Retention strategy:
"...a lack of structured supervision and poor quality supervisors, who themselves also lack capacity to conduct professional supervision"



INTRODUCTION

- Recruitment and Retention strategy:
"...a lack of structured supervision and poor quality supervisors, who themselves also lack capacity to conduct professional supervision"
- Pieterse (1961) made a similar claim



INTRODUCTION

- Has social work in SA been practising supervision over the past five decades beyond historical bureaucratic discourses, and has it engaged with changing global, local and personal contexts to develop and sustain critically responsive practices?



INTRODUCTION

- Has social work in SA been practising supervision over the past four decades beyond historical bureaucratic discourses, and has it engaged with changing global, local and personal contexts to develop and sustain critically responsive practices?
- Is social work supervision in SA keeping up with the times?



INTRODUCTION

- To examine the interplay between the historical development, current practices and future challenges of social work supervision



INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION



INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

- Stage 1: administrative roots (1878-1910)
- Stage 2: a change of context of supervisory training and emergence of a literature base (1910-1930)
- Stage 3: influence of practice theory and methods (1930-1950).
- Stage 4: debate about interminable supervision and autonomous practice (1950-1970)



SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

- 3 periods



SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

1. Emerging and dominantly administrative years (1960-1975)
 - 1965: fully-fledge supervision system operating in Dept of Social Welfare
 - working conditions hamper supervision focus



SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

2. Period of integrated supervision functions and escalation of knowledge (1975-1990)

- Botha's (1985) educational model
- supervision courses offered at universities
 - first course (1978)



SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3. Times of change (1990-beyond)

- plethora of academic theses
- supervision became less favoured
 - transition of political and welfare system
 - focus on service delivery
 - brain drain = lost generation
 - many dissertations = modest in scope
 - ✓ based on North American texts
 - ✓ secondary frame of references



CURRENT STATUS OF SUPERVISION IN SA



Research methodology

- Cross-sectional exploratory and descriptive design
- Qualitative
- Family oriented NGO
- Purposive sample
- 7 supervisors and 14 social workers
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews



CASE STUDY



CASE STUDY

- Working conditions of social workers and supervisors



CASE STUDY

- Working conditions of social workers and supervisors

Social worker:

"...never mind supervision and everything else...I have to keep the work going..."



CASE STUDY

- Working conditions of social workers and supervisors

Supervisor:

“...supervision is the last thing on my mind”



CASE STUDY

- Training of supervisors



CASE STUDY

- The significance of supervision

Seasoned social worker:

“I need a soundboard and some authority, especially with the implementation of the new Children's Act.”



CASE STUDY

- The significance of supervision

Newly qualified social worker:

“I need direct guidance all over to do the job, especially solid support.”



CASE STUDY

- The significance of supervision

Supervisor:

“Since I’m co-responsible for what the workers are doing, I have to protect myself, the worker and clients.”



CASE STUDY

- Definition of supervision

"control"

"guidance"

"support"



CASE STUDY

- **Functions of supervision**

Social worker:

“supervision in my situation has only one function – to exercise control over my work”



CASE STUDY

- **Functions of supervision**

Social worker:

“I’m in desperate need for support in my work. I have to deal with severe traumatic situations, but my contact with my supervisor is minimal and mainly based on inspection of my work.”



CASE STUDY

- Functions of supervision

Newly qualified supervisee:

*“I don’t know what I’m supposed to know
and don’t even know what to ask”*



CASE STUDY

- **Functions of supervision**

Seasoned supervisee:

“My supervisor can tell me nothing I don’t know – but she has the red pen for signing off my reports.”



CASE STUDY

- **Functions of supervision**

Supervisor:

“I know that I don’t give enough attention to my workers, especially in terms of support and training. It’s awful and I am constantly feeling guilty, but I really don’t have the time to nurse them and am just surviving myself”



CASE STUDY

- **Functions of supervision**

Supervisor:

“I also need support, but got nobody to turn to – I’m on the edge of a breakdown.”



CASE STUDY

- Practice theories and models of supervision

Supervisor:

"I just complete the forms of the supervision manual and that's it..."



CASE STUDY

- **Supervision methods**

- ✓ **individual supervision**

- X **peer supervision**

- X **coaching**

- X **mentoring**



CASE STUDY

- Consultation

Seasoned social worker:

"I'm on a so-called consultation level, but the only difference with supervision is that I now see my supervisor less. She still has to sign my statutory reports and still inspects my work."



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

within a social
development paradigm



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- **Supervisee empowerment**
 - solution-focussed
 - strengths-based
 - **fair working conditions**



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- globalisation
- neo-liberal social work



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- Standardised, accredited and accessible supervision training
- nationally registered as an accredited supervisor



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- definition of supervision:
movement away from a deficit
and clinical orientation.



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- embrace all functions
- administrative function?
 - Children's Act



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- outcomes-based
- competency models



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- policy directing supervision content
 - key to the recruitment and retention of staff



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- Supervision methods
 - internet-based
 - peer supervision
 - mentoring and coaching



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- External supervision / consultation practices



ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

- Additional recommendations:
 - Cultural diversity
 - Ethics
 - Minimum standards



CONCLUSION

The existing theoretical foundation and practices of social work supervision in SA do not extensively meet the dynamics of the contemporary international and local social work domain



CONCLUSION

Cicero: “...*no wind is favourable unless you know the port to which you are heading*”.



CONCLUSION

If we do not know where we are going with supervisory practices, we will probably end up somewhere else!

